

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1, 19, and 20 as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus, comprising:

a) input means for inputting consecutive image data;

b) dividing means for dividing the image data into blocks each constituted of a plurality of pixels;

c) detecting means for detecting a motion vector of each block;

d) judging means for judging a border block in accordance with a frequency of occurrence of the motion vector detected by said detecting means, the border block including forming a ~~boundary area between~~ an object area and a background area corresponding to a background of the object area; and

e) extracting means for setting an initial contour of the object area ~~on the basis of in~~ accordance with the border block judged by said judging means, and extracting the object area using the set initial contour and an active outline model.

2. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said judging means judges the border block in accordance with an occurrence frequency of the motion vector detected by said detecting means.

3. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said judging means classifies blocks into the border block, an object block corresponding to the object area, and a background block corresponding to the background area.

4. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said judging means judges a block from which the motion vector having a first largest occurrence frequency was detected, as the background block, and a block from which the motion vector having a second largest occurrence frequency was detected, as the object block.

5. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said judging means judges a block from which the motion vector having a third or more largest occurrence frequency was detected, as the border block.

6. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said judging means judges a block from which the motion vector having a first largest occurrence frequency was detected, as the background block, and a block from which the motion vector having a second or more largest occurrence frequency was detected and being adjacent to the background block, as the border block.

7. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said judging means judges a block from which the motion vector having a second largest occurrence frequency was detected,

as the object block, and a block from which the motion vector having a first more largest occurrence frequency was detected and being adjacent to the object block, as the border block.

8. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said judging means calculates similarity degrees of the motion vectors of the background and object blocks relative to the block from which the motion vector having a third or more occurrence frequency was detected, and re-classifies the block in accordance with the similarity degrees.

19 9. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the similarity degree is calculated from an inner produce of motion vectors.

10. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the similarity degree is calculated from a distance between motion vectors.

11. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said judging means re-divides the block divided by said dividing means into second blocks and judges the second block as to whether the second block is the border block.

12. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said judging means re-divides the block from which the motion vector having a third or more largest occurrence frequency was detected, into the second blocks..

13. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said judging means re-divides a block from which the motion vector having a second largest occurrence frequency was detected and which is adjacent to the block from which the motion vector having a first largest occurrent frequency was detected, into the second blocks.

14. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said judging means re-divides a block which the motion vector having a first largest occurrence frequency was detected and which is adjacent to the block from which the motion vector having a second largest occurrent frequency was detected, into the second blocks.

15. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising encoding means for encoding the image data in the object area extracted by said extracting means.

16. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said encoding means encodes the image data in the background area.

17. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 15, further comprising transmitting means for transmitting the image data encoded by said encoding means.

18. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 15, further comprising recording means for recording the image data encoded by said encoding means in a storage medium.

19. (Currently Amended) An image processing method comprising the steps of:

a) inputting consecutive image data;

b) dividing the image data into blocks each constituted of a plurality of pixels;

c) detecting a motion vector of each block;

*Is this supported?*  
d) judging a border block in accordance with a frequency of occurrence of the detected motion vector, the border block including ~~forming a boundary area between~~ an object area and a background area corresponding to a background of the object area; and

*Is this supported?*  
e) setting an initial contour of the object area ~~on the basis of~~ in accordance with the border block judged in said judging step, and extracting the object area using the set initial contour and an active outline model.

20. (Currently Amended) A storage medium storing program codes for image processing steps, the program codes comprising:

a) codes for an input step of inputting consecutive image data;

b) codes for a dividing step of dividing the image data into blocks each constituted of a plurality of pixels;

c) codes for a detecting step of detecting a motion vector of each block;

*Is this supported?*  
d) codes for a judging step of judging a border block in accordance with a frequency of occurrence of the motion vector detected by the detecting step, the border block including ~~forming a boundary area between~~ an object area and a background area corresponding to a background of the object area; and

19 e) codes for an extracting step of setting an initial contour of the object area ~~on the basis~~  
of in accordance with the border block judged in said judging step, and extracting the object area  
using the set initial contour and an active outline model.

---